

Testimony for Appropriations Committee
Health Subcommittee
Public Hearing re: H.B. No. 5037 AN ACT ADJUSTING THE STATE
BUDGET FOR THE BIENNIUM ENDING JUNE 30, 2023
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The Governor's Prevention Partnership
February 24, 2022

Senators Osten, Abrams, Somers, Representatives Walker, Dillon, and Kennedy, and other esteemed members of the Appropriations Committee, I am here today to advocate for continued support for the prevention infrastructure in the state of Connecticut and the maximum level of funding for prevention programs.

I am the co-president of The Governor's Prevention Partnership, a statewide nonprofit organization that has been focused on keeping Connecticut's young people safe from the threats facing them – including illegal substances and bullying – by connecting them to positive influences in their schools, communities, and personal lives for nearly 35 years.

I'm sure as an organization, we've said it before, and I'll say it again today: our work is more critical than ever before.

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought tremendous suffering, and approaches to mitigate the virus itself have focused on prevention. Wash your hands. Wear a mask. Keep six feet away from those around you.

It was accessible, easy to understand, and easy to do.

We need this type of mindset to tackle all the preventable challenges our young people are facing. It doesn't have to be complicated; you don't need a lot of training. It's as simple as adding some small things to your everyday routine.

And that's where our focus is at The Partnership: finding ways to build the capacity of adults – whether parents, teachers, program providers, and others – to engage in prevention conversations and activities with the young people in their life.

There have been devastating overdoses by young people this year in Connecticut. A middle schooler lost his life to fentanyl in Hartford. Yet, another in Bloomfield had to be administered Naloxone (Narcan) more than once to counteract the effect of a potential opioid overdose.

Research shows that parents and supportive adults can make a difference in whether a youth will engage in at-risk behaviors.

The Partnership and other prevention organizations offer sessions and resources to support caring adults to better understand the dangers of substance use and provide tools to start the critical conversations with the young people in their lives.

We offered responsive sessions after the overdose in Hartford and the subsequent THC overdoses in New Haven in English and Spanish and stand ready to provide more. We are here to bring prevention to your communities.

Now is not the time to reduce investment in prevention services. The Department of Mental Health and Addiction Services has done a tremendous job bringing prevention to the forefront of these conversations, especially as it pertains to the opioid epidemic. If anything, it is time to increase that investment to ensure that the trauma associated with Covid-19 for our young people does not lead to additional long-term effects on their health and well-being.

Thank you for your time. We are poised and ready with our colleagues in the prevention and intervention field to be part of the work to keep our young people healthy.

Respectfully Submitted,

Kelly Juleson Mongillo

Co-President, The Governor's Prevention Partnership

PreventionWorksCT.org